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ABSTRACT

A survey was undertaken of 102 community colleges in California to determine: (1) managerial practices related to affirmative action; (2) the relationship between the management of Title IX and affirmative action programs; and (3) the extent to which the duties of affirmative action officers are considered full-time or collateral duties. The results indicate that most institutions assign affirmative action responsibility on a part-time basis to individuals with various job titles. It was also found that affirmative action officers report to high ranking administrators. Affirmative action programs and Title IX compliance are coordinated by the same individual in more than half of the community colleges surveyed. The implications of these findings for personnel selection are also considered. (Author/MSE)

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THE MANAGERS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THEIR ROLE IN THE SELECTION PROCESS*

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The impact of affirmative action programs at community colleges throughout the country still remains to be accurately assessed. The difficulties underlying the compilation of meaningful data are evident from the Carnegie Council Report and it is perhaps significant to note that the response from two-year colleges to the survey conducted by the Council in 1975 did not yield sufficient data on the racial composition of its faculties to provide a reliable basis for analysis.[1]

Apart from the issues related to the compilation of data, a more pressing one relates to the changing scene in Washington from which affirmative practices have evolved. The revamping of the Labor Department's antidiscrimination rules, the changeover in HEW's staff, shifts in responsibility between Federal agencies charged with compliance, the increasing backlog of complaints, the easing off of compliance reviews, and the widespread publicity afforded reverse discrimination cases serve to thwart our efforts to achieve equal opportunity. Thus, it is apparent that to counterbalance these factors, strong leadership must be forthcoming from college presidents and their affirmative action officers. In fact, the clout (real or imagined) originally associated with federal agencies has dwindled to

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* This paper is based upon a presentation "The Selection Process: Is It Working for Affirmative Action?" at the national convention of the American Association for Affirmative Action held in Washington, D.C., May 8-11, 1977.

[1] Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. Making Affirmative Action Work in Higher Education. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1975.

a point that many institutions are satisfied with summarizing data for a variety of statistical reports for state and federal agencies involved with equal opportunity.

The college scene, of course, has also changed. The heightened activity of the sixties, which lent considerable support to those programs that emerged in the 1970's has decreased and leveled off. The lively action that was associated with concerned groups of students and faculty has been partially replaced by apathy. Increasingly, special interest groups are appearing which attempt to undermine affirmative action programs. It is indeed unfortunate that today we are confronted with "volunteers" for affirmative action committees whose sole purpose is to block rather than facilitate progress. In addition, the timing is also working against any accelerated gains in the employment of women and minorities. With reduced budgets and a limited number of positions to fill each year, we may be rapidly reaching a plateau with respect to whatever modest increases have already been accomplished.

In the absence of energetic external and internal support, the affirmative action officer is thrust into a particularly strategic position with heavy responsibilities for paving the way as change agent. Indeed, if change is to occur, it is evident that it must happen from within each institution as a result of the kind of strong commitment that assures equal opportunity in employment. Yet, relatively little attention has actually been directed toward the specialized role of the affirmative action officer from a managerial perspective. It is difficult, therefore,

to consider the selection process without reviewing the role of the individual who can make it work for affirmative action.

The fact that affirmative action duties continue to be assigned on a collateral basis and to individuals holding a great range of unrelated job titles provides some evidence that colleges still have not fully analyzed the qualifications, academic background, and human relations skills that are essential for a high level of job performance, nor have they systematically studied the amount of time required to effectively carry out these responsibilities. Moreover, knowing where the officer is placed within the college's table of organization provides another clue with which to unravel attitudes of top ranking administrators toward the role of the affirmative action officer.

It is obvious from the foregoing that I believe the affirmative action officer is the key figure in establishing, implementing and sustaining an affirmative action program which, in turn, determines the effectiveness of the entire selection process. Therefore, I would like to more fully consider with you the affirmative action officer from a managerial point of view - a question that has attracted my interest since the time I first assumed affirmative action responsibilities as a collateral duty while functioning as Associate Dean of Instruction.

To study this question, I conducted surveys in 1973[2] and 1974[3] among fifty-eight public institutions in New York State, thirty-eight of

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[2]Kronovet, E. "Affirmative Action Plan Criteria." Research in Education, December, 1973.

[3]Kronovet, E. "Management of an Affirmative Action Program: A Follow-up Report." Research in Education, August, 1973.

which were community colleges. The returns were excellent for both surveys: 100% in 1973 and 94.8% in 1974. The results indicated that only 7.9% of the community colleges had full time affirmative action officers. Furthermore, those assigned equal opportunity responsibility on a collateral basis included a range of job titles from president to director of grants.

More recently, in December of 1976, I sent questionnaires to the presidents of 102 community colleges in California and obtained a 97% return. Once again, the purposes of the survey were to determine whether or not affirmative action is viewed primarily as a collateral duty or as warranting full time employment status. I was also interested in determining the individual to whom the officer reports, and, at those institutions where affirmative action is assigned as a collateral responsibility, the primary job title of those to whom it is assigned, as well as the job title of the individual to whom the officer reports.

Although a variety of questions were asked, this summary highlights only those most pertinent for our session today. Briefly, here are my findings:

1. Among 102 community colleges in California, eighty (78.4%) have their affirmative action officers functioning in this role as a collateral duty.
2. Only eight (7.8%) are full time at their colleges as affirmative action officer, and four (3.9%) are full time with their districts.

3. Six institutions (5.9%) employ individuals on a part-time basis, while one (0.9%) reports assigning work for affirmative action for one hour each week.
4. The positions held by individuals who were also designated as affirmative action officers cover a considerable range of job titles:

    President

    Vice-president

    Assistant Superintendent

    Dean

    Dean of Instruction

    Dean of Administration

    Dean of College Services

    Director of Personnel

    Business Manager

    Projects Coordinator

    Registrar

    Instructor

    Counselor

5. A few institutions (3.9%) have teaching faculty function in this role on a collateral basis.
6. One (0.9%) institution reported having no affirmative action officer.
7. At thirteen colleges (12.7%) presidents identified themselves as functioning as affirmative action officers. This was reported at large institutions with over 20,000 students, as well as for those with an enrollment of under 5,000.

8. Twenty-seven (26.4%) of the institutions surveyed have individuals at the levels of vice-president, assistant vice-president and dean serving in this role.
9. A total of forty institutions (39.2%) have individuals at the dean level or higher serving as affirmative action officer.
10. More than half (56.8%) of those institutions responding indicated that their affirmative action officers also have responsibility for Title IX.
11. At eighty-six (84.3%) community colleges, affirmative action officers report to high ranking administrators: 59.8% to the president, and 24.5% to the chancellor.
12. Two institutions (1.9%) have their affirmative action officers reporting directly to their Governing Boards.

These results are not directly comparable with those of my previous studies since they do not relate to the same years as the current investigation and have overlapping rather than identical sets of questions. However, since the purposes of these surveys were not entirely statistical, but concerned with gathering information on the management of affirmative action programs, some parallel trends may be noted with some legitimacy.

First, we can note that the assignment of affirmative action duties on a collateral basis is consistent with the pattern that emerged from among New York Community Colleges. Secondly, the range of job titles was similar, although in New York fewer presidents identified themselves

as their institution's affirmative action officer, whereas in California thirteen (12.7%) presidents named themselves as affirmative action officers.

Now, whether or not having the president also function as affirmative action officer facilitates or slows down the rate of progress is a matter of conjecture and best determined in relation to each campus and the practices applied to the selection process at each institution. In fact, it is important to consider those critical factors that can be analyzed to ascertain that the selection process is transforming a "paper plan" into an effective instrument for change.

First, a well developed recruiting network must precede the selection process. More specifically, this means that recruiting nets for faculty and administrators must be national in scope, with emphasis upon advertisements in newspapers with wide circulation, as well as professional publications. For classified and civil service support staff, extensive local advertising is essential. Needless to say, this form of recruiting requires a substantial budget.

The number of applicants to pass through the selection process will be significantly limited unless the time interval between publication and deadline date for submission of application and supporting documents is adequate. We are well aware that very brief intervals are a way of purposefully depressing the size of the candidate pool. An analysis of this practice can help assess whether or not the institution's policy of "open recruiting" accurately reflects a receptivity to consider well qualified outsiders, particularly from among women and minority applicants, or is merely a charade to help camouflage the fact that an individual has already been identified for the position.

Another important factor worth noting is the job description and whether or not it highlights some obscure qualification as a way of justifying the subsequent appointment of a less qualified candidate.

Once we develop a strong recruitment program, we are then confronted with methods for selecting the very best to be interviewed from among an enormous number of highly qualified applicants. Indeed, this is an issue which continues to challenge the most committed among us. Furthermore, how do we reconcile confidentiality of the affirmative action ethnic data form with flagging well qualified minorities and women? And how do we resolve the matter of considering minimum job related qualifications when five hundred out of a possible 800 applicants meet the criteria for eligibility? And how do we organize the screening and interview process so that equal opportunity practices occur each step of the way?

One way of assuring greater internal compliance is through the appointment of affirmative action monitors who participate in the screening process, as well as in interviews. The monitor's role must be clearly defined and task oriented for purposes of determining whether or not the interviews were conducted in a manner consistent with the institution's policy of equal opportunity.

These expectations, however, place a burden of responsibility on the monitors, since they must also be responsible for keeping the affirmative action officer advised of an alleged violation of equal opportunity screening and interview procedures. I believe, therefore, that monitors should be carefully screened on the basis of their commitment to affir-

mative action goals, their availability to participate in training programs conducted by the affirmative action officer, as well as their willingness to provide a considerable amount of time to the selection process.

It should be recognized that there are several other advantages in having monitors work with interview committees. First, more individuals become knowledgeable about Federal regulations and their institutional affirmative action program. Secondly, they are in an excellent position to carry this information back to their departments. Of special significance, however, is the widespread support they can provide for the implementation of an affirmative action plan.

There is one final factor that must be built into the selection process if it is to work. I refer to the withholding of appointments by the president upon the recommendation of the affirmative action officer. Without this built-in system for taking corrective measures when confronted with violations of the institution's affirmative action program, individuals will continue to test out the selection process and monitoring system.

Although I must admit it has occasionally wavered, my own optimism for the potential of affirmative action programs in opening the door wider for women and minorities continues to sustain itself. What has diminished, unfortunately, is my expectation that strong support will be forthcoming from Washington, as well as from a large number of colleagues. There are times when we may stand alone, but if we continue to be action oriented, if we continue to maintain the machinery for the selection process, and if we increase our supporters through affirmative action committees and monitors, we stand a chance to move ahead.